

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-20

INFO OCT-01 ADP-00 AGR-20 EB-11 COME-00 INT-08 OMB-01

TRSE-00 OPIC-12 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10

L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-03 RSC-01 PRS-01 SS-15 USIA-15

RSR-01 /142 W

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P R 132217Z AUG 73

FM AMCONSUL BELIZE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3097

INFO AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA

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GUATEMALA FOR AGATT

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: ECON EAGR PFOR

SUBJECT: BELIZE LAND REFORM PROGRAM

1. IN SPEECH AT AN AGRICULTURAL FAIR WHICH WAS PUBLISHED YESTERDAY, SANTIAGO PERDOMO, MIN AGRICULTURE, LANDS AND COOPERATIVES, DISCUSSED PROPOSED LAND REFORMS. THE THEME WAS BELIZE FOR BELIZEANS.

2. PERDOMO EXPLAINED THAT MOST OF THE BETTER FARMING LAND HAD NOT BEEN AVAILABLE TO THE GOVERNMENT

HAVING BEEN HELD IN PRIVATE ESTATES, AND THAT IT WAS IMPERATIVE FOR THE PUP TO CORRECT THIS. THE SITUATION IS BEING CHANGED BY THE NATIONALIZATION OF THOSE ESTATES AS NEEDED TO PROVIDE LAND FOR BELIZEANS.

3. THIS PROGRAM WILL CONTINUE, ACCORDING TO PERDOMO, AND HE WARNED PROSPECTIVE PURCHASERS OF PRIVATE ESTATES THAT THE GOB WILL NOT ALLOW THE "DISPOSITION" OF FARMERS WHO HAVE BEEN IN OC-

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CUPATION OF THE LAND.

4. PERDOMO STATED THAT FURTHER MEASURES ARE BEING STUDIED AND THAT HE WOULD INTRODUCE A BILL TO CONTROL THE SALES OF LAND TO NON-NATIONALS IN DESIGNATED AREAS, AND TO ENABLE THE GOVERNMENT TO PAY FOR THE ACQUISITION OF LAND BY GOVERNMENT TREASURY BONDS "IN PLACES WHERE THOSE LANDS NOT BEING UTILIZED BY THE OWNERS IN A RESPONSIBLE AND PROFITABLE WAY." TEXT WILL BE SENT BY POUCH.

5. COMMENT: IN FACT, LAND SO FAR EXPROPRIATED OR MARKED FOR EX-PROPRIATION IS OFTEN AS NOT BEING DEVELOPED IN A "RESPONSIBLE" WAY BY NON-NATIONALS, ALTHOUGH CONSIDERABLE HAS BEEN PURCHASED FOR SPECULATION. BELIZEAN SQUATTERS HAVE OFTEN COME IN AFTER THE PURCHASE AND SOME DEVELOPMENT BY NON-NATIONALS AND HAVE IN SOME CASES SEEMINGLY BEEN ENCOURAGED TO DO SO WITH THE ASSURANCE BY POLITICIANS THAT THE LAND WOULD BECOME THEIRS. PAYMENT IN ANY FORM OR JUDICIAL PROCESSES LEADING TO COMPENSATION HAVE, SO FAR, BEEN GREATLY DELAYED. THE CASE OF JEROME KOS IS AN EXAMPLE. WHILE WE DO NOT HAVE THE EXACT DETAILS OF HOW THE GOVERNMENT PROGRAM EXPECTS TO WORK, WE FEEL THAT THIS WILL PROBABLY GREATLY DETER ANY FUTURE NON-NATIONAL INVESTMENT IN AGRICULTURE, WHICH URGENTLY NEEDS CAPITAL. THE SITUATION COULD POSSIBLY CAUSE PROBLEMS FOR U.S.-BELIZE RELATIONS IF THE GOB DOES NOT ARRIVE AT MEASURES FOR PROMPT AND REASONABLE COMPENSATION. THERE IS ONLY ONE CASE WE KNOW OF WHERE COMPENSATION HAS BECOME A PROBLEM (THAT OF KOS), BUT IT APPEARS LIKELY THAT THERE WILL BE OTHERS IN THE FUTURE. WOLLAM

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